The Righteousness of the Heart: The Mark of a Kingdom Citizen

This post is a continuation of the study "The things above vs. the things on earth: the call to the true life in the Kingdom"

Another thing from above, after which we must walk and which defines the Kingdom of God, is righteousness, or more precisely, the absence of sin. (Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever. Psalm 93)

The dictionary defines righteousness as: without sin, pure, immaculate, unblemished, clean.

The Kingdom of God is described in the Word of Scripture as a Kingdom of righteousness. (Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13)

The Son of God said that we must seek not only the Kingdom of God, but also His righteousness, which means that the Kingdom of God is much more than a place with streets of gold (But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Matthew 6:33).

We find written in Scripture that the Kingdom of God does not consist of earthly pleasures, of food and drink, or of the things the natural man seeks. In this Kingdom, we find the righteousness in which God dwells, His peace, and the things from above that define this Kingdom (For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Romans 14:17).

The Word of Scripture tells us that all who are in the Kingdom of God love righteousness and hate iniquity. Only those who hunger and thirst for the values of righteousness from the heavenly Kingdom can dwell in it (Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Matthew 5:6).

The Word of Scripture warns us that whoever does not desire and does not live in righteousness is not accepted into this Kingdom of righteousness (In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. 1 John 3:10).

Upon closer inspection, we can observe that there are many who believe they are born again, who speak in tongues, who prophesy, who perform miracles—yet do not live a life of righteousness. However, at the end of life, they will face a great surprise (Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matthew 7:22–23).

To avoid being deceived, we have at our disposal a simple criterion by which each person can easily verify whether they are part of this Kingdom. The Word of Scripture, which does not lie, says that only those who live in righteousness are born again of God (If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. 1 John 2:29; Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 1 John 3:7).

The Holy Scripture clearly states that if our righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, who lived according to the standard of the Law of Moses, we shall by no means enter this Kingdom (For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20).

The righteousness of the Kingdom from above is far superior to the righteousness in which those who kept the law of Moses lived, where we find the commandments: Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbour's... (Deuteronomy 5:21)

To describe the righteousness of the Pharisees, we can look at the apostle Paul before his conversion. He was a Pharisee and lived a very strict life according to the law of Moses, so that he could say concerning the righteousness which is in the law, that he was blameless (Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Philippians 3:5).

The Holy Scripture tells us that entry into the Kingdom of God takes place during this present life, not after we depart into eternity, as most believe (Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13–14).

We are called to live in the righteousness of the Kingdom now, not after we leave the earth. Only those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be able to see and enter this Kingdom (Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him Acts 10:34–35).

God's plan is not limited to a cheap salvation, which consists only in repentance (putting off the old man) and the forgiveness of sins, but it includes the restoration of the image of God in us (putting on the new man) and bringing us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of the righteousness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

Putting on the new man is the boundary between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of God (And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Ephesians 4:24).

We will now list some of these things from above that are found in the Kingdom:

Integrity / Fairness

Whoever loves righteousness and hates iniquity receives the right to enter this Kingdom. The one who receives the right to enter the Kingdom of righteousness does not live in sin, does not rejoice in iniquity, does not deceive, does not use bribes or gifts, does not walk in deceit, and does not slander (Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. 1 John 3:6, 8, 10).

Those who are in the Kingdom of righteousness do not covet anything that belongs to their neighbor. They do not use or appropriate what belongs to others. They do not rejoice in things that are not theirs.

Let us take a practical example: they do not take things from the workplace that do not belong to them. They do not use the company car, phone, or other resources for personal purposes. They do not have stolen or pirated software on their computers (Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's... anything that is thy neighbour's. Deuteronomy 5:21).

They do not work illegally, do not steal taxes from the State, and do not covet anything that is not theirs (Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Matthew 22:21. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers. Romans 13:6).

When they have exams, they do not cheat or steal what they have not learned.

If they have in their possession things they acquired dishonestly while living in darkness, they will cease using them, return them, and make restitution where possible (Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. Numbers 5:7).

They avoid all greed for money. They are citizens of the household of God, cared for by the heavenly Father through the church, which is the body of Christ. They do not seek social assistance from outsiders, such as the State (from the Philistines), for heating, electricity, and so on. They follow the example of Abraham, who did not accept to receive the cave of Machpelah for free from the Hittites (But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33).

The Father (who is in the Kingdom of God) does not use lies, deceit, or trickery, and does not rejoice in iniquity by taking money from the State for childcare leave up to two years when in reality the mother is the one caring for the child.

They also do not collaborate with the employer to intentionally obtain unemployment benefits in order to enjoy unearned money (Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5).

Self-examination: Do you have things from work or elsewhere that you have taken and now use? Do you have unlicensed software on your computer? Do you work illegally or withhold taxes that you owe to the State? When you apply for money from the State (subsidies, unemployment, social assistance, childcare leave...), do you use lies when filling out the forms? If you do such things, do not deceive yourself by believing that you are in the Kingdom of God.

Citizens of this Kingdom hate iniquity, hate every way of lying, and every opportunity to sin. They hate the practice of giving or receiving bribes (He that hateth gifts shall live. Proverbs 15:27). Scripture tells us that those who practice bribery have a corrupt heart (A gift destroyeth the heart. Ecclesiastes 7:7).

Bribery, according to the dictionary: a sum of money or objects received, offered, or promised to a person in order to cause them to violate their duties or to perform their duties more conscientiously (And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment 1 Samuel 8:3).

Perhaps few of us are in a position that gives us the opportunity to receive gifts or bribes, but most are in situations where they are tempted to give. Many, in order to solve their problems, find themselves using gifts or bribes.

Perhaps until now, giving bribes (gifts) has not been viewed as sin, but we must understand that when we initiate the rewarding of a service that has already been paid for—whether public or private—we give the other person an opportunity to sin, to fall into transgression.

Through our gesture, we are the ones who provoke the other to break the Word of God—we are the ones who corrupt their heart.

The teaching of the Kingdom warns us in the most serious way, showing us how grave it is to tempt souls and corrupt their hearts (It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck. Luke 17:1.2).

To corrupt our hearts, Satan brings many such occasions into our lives (an example being in the hospital, at the doctor). When we are on the hospital bed and in need, if we cause the nurse (or sister) to be more kind by placing something in her pocket, then we are the ones who tempt her, bringing her the occasion to sin. And it may happen that the nurse or sister is also a believer.

Through our gift, we ask her to take more care of us, and she will end up neglecting the one who has nothing to give. By receiving these gifts, she will corrupt her heart and wrong the one who has nothing. She will break the Word of God, which forbids her to receive gifts (And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. Exodus 23:8).

God commands her not to receive gifts, and we tempt her to break the Word of God. Let us ask ourselves: If we do this, are we not serving Satan?

To understand the gravity of this sin, it is helpful to observe that even the laws of the secular world condemn more severely the one who tempts another to take a bribe than the one who accepts it.

Citizens of the Kingdom must always be on alert not to be among those who bring occasions to sin, not to do the work of the evil one (Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. Romans 14:13).

We are aware that those who choose to live in the righteousness of Christ will lose the advantages that gifts and bribes bring. However, they will be rewarded with peace and rest from above, peace that certifies their belonging to the Kingdom (And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. Isaiah 32:17).

Pure Heart

Those who belong to the Kingdom from above do not defile their hearts with unclean things. They do not walk in the counsel of the wicked, do not set any wicked thing before their eyes, cover their eyes so as not to see evil, and stop their ears so as not to

hear inappropriate words (Isaiah 33:15).

They do not love the things that feed and awaken the lusts of the flesh and do not use them; some of these being the publications of the world (magazines, books, newspapers), the radio of the world, and the television or internet of the world (Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners Psalm 1:1).

Those who are in the Kingdom—in the body of Christ—watch carefully that there is no one among them who defiles their heart with the things of the world and thereby contaminates the others (Looking diligently lest any man fail... Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau. Hebrews 12:15.16). They watch over one another, so that each of them may have a pure eye and a pure heart.

They watch that the use of the internet is limited to what is necessary (at work, for bank payments, taxes, etc.), in a controlled and filtered manner, so as not to give Satan the opportunity to tempt and feed the flesh or awaken lusts (Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity Psalm 119:37. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof Romans 13:14).

Those who are in the Kingdom of God are called to wear modest clothing. They will not wear revealing garments, so as not to bring an occasion of sin to their fellow men (... that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety 1 Timothy 2:9).

Therefore, they do not go to places such as beaches or other public areas where people are dressed indecently, so as not to defile their eyes by looking at the undressed, and not to give others the occasion to lust after their bodies and sin.

They are very careful regarding the lust of the eyes, because it affects the entire body (The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness Luke 11:34. I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? Job 31:1).

They keep their hearts pure, because only in this way will they see God (Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God Matthew 5:8). For this reason, they have removed from before their eyes everything that causes them to fall into sin (I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside Psalm 101:3. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee Matthew 18:9).

They avoid and flee from the lusts of the flesh, which harm the soul (Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul 1 Peter 2:11. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world 1 John 2:16).

In conclusion: If we are greedy for money and covet the goods of the "Egyptians," if we do not want to pay our taxes, if we work illegally, if we give bribes at the hospital or elsewhere, if the television or internet of the world (Facebook, YouTube...) is our daily nourishment... if until now we have not loved the things from above—namely, the commandments of the Lord Jesus, which call us to live in the righteousness of the Kingdom—if we do not delight in them, then we must be certain that we are not part of the Kingdom of righteousness.

Personal Examination:

– Do you seek the Kingdom of righteousness as a treasure of great value?

– Are you hungry and thirsty for righteousness? Do you strive to be immaculate, without sin?

– Do you live according to the laws of righteousness that govern the Kingdom of God?

This post is an excerpt from the booklet "The New Birth", which you can read in full, free of charge. More studies and resources for spiritual awakening are available at https://www.unmodifiedword.com.